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C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 000585

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARP, EEB/ESC/TFS; TREASURY FOR KRISTEN HECHT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/20/2018

TAGS: EFIN KU KTFN PGOV PREL PTER

SUBJECT: TERRORIST FINANCIER MUBARAK AL-BATHALI REMAINS IN DETENTION

REF: KUWAIT 557

Classified By: Ambassador Deborah K. Jones for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Kuwaiti press reported on May 21 that Kuwaiti terrorist financier and UNSCR 1267 designee Mubarak Al-Bathali had been arrested on May 8 for inciting youth to fight in Iraq and Afghanistan. The article indicated that although Al-Bathali was initially due to be released from detention on May 12, the Office of the Public Prosecutor had extended his detention for an additional 21 days.

¶2. (C) The decision to extend Al-Bathali's detention followed a May 12 meeting by the Ambassador and S/CT Dailey with Kuwait State Security and MFA officials (reftel) in which they raised both general concerns about GOK cooperation on counterterrorism and specific concerns about Al-Bathali. In that meeting, Under Secretary for State Security Affairs Major General Suleiman Al-Muhaylan had said Al-Bathali was due to be released in short order following four days of detention for questioning.

¶3. (C) Al-Bathali had been arrested on May 8, following the publication of his interview with the local Arabic-language newspaper Al-Qabas, in which he openly admitted to inciting young people to fight in Iraq and Afghanistan and helping fighters enter Iraq through the Syrian and Saudi Arabian borders. Per Kuwaiti law, Al-Bathali could normally only be detained for four days for questioning. However, according to information published by Al-Qabas, and subsequently confirmed to the Embassy by our contact in the Ministry of Interior, Prosecutor Mubarak Al-Refaie, gave instructions that Al-Bathali be held for an additional 21 days pending further investigation by state authorities.

¶4. (C) Per the current judicial order, it appears that Al-Bathali will be eligible for release on or about June 2. Post has no indications at this point of whether he will be released on that date or his detention will be extended.

¶5. (C) Comment: Interestingly, the Kuwaitis waited until after the May 17 general election to announce that Al-Bathali's detention was being extended.

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